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NOTE ON THE TURTLE-BACK CELT.

BY S. V. PROUDFIT.

BENNINGS.—The Anacostia, sometimes called the “Eastern Branch,” skirting the city of Washington on the east and south-east, widens into a considerable bay as it enters the Potomac. The valley on the eastern side of the Anacostia is for several miles above the mouth of the stream comparatively level, and but a few feet above high-water mark. The soil is sandy and has been under cultivation for many years. Here was located an Indian village mentioned by Captain John Smith in his description of the Patowomeke: “And lastly Nacotchtanke, with eighty able men. The river ten miles above this place maketh his passage down a low, pleasant valley,” &c. (Smith’s map of Virginia). Though all portions of the valley described give abundant proof of long-continued occupation, the principal part of the village must have been almost due east of where the Capitol now stands. This conclusion rests on the greater number of relics found at the point indicated and now known as Bennings. The existence of this old camping-ground has been well known and the place visited regularly for years, but the supply of relics seems inexhaustible, furnishing stone implements of every grade known to the Indians of the Potomac, from the rude “turtle-back” of quartzite or argillite to the most delicately finished arrow-heads.

ANALOSTAN.—On the Virginia shore of the Potomac, opposite the foot of Analostan Island and between the old canal and river, is a narrow ridge of land rising above the river perhaps twenty feet or more and nearly parallel with its course. Here within an area of two acres and at the extreme upper end of the ridge has been found every form of stone implement common to Indian use or manufacture. Axes, scrapers, knives, perforators, and arrow-heads—the last in the same countless profusion as at Bennings.

CHAIN BRIDGE.—At the foot of the Little Falls, where the “Chain Bridge” spans the Potomac, about three miles above Georgetown, the Maryland heights, rising above the river perhaps two hundred feet, form a comparatively level plateau, back of which the hills rise again in broken lines. On this table-land was another

village site, where the evidences of aboriginal occupation are not less than those noted at Bennings and Analostan. On the opposite shore the hills are broken and abrupt, without the crowning plateau, but many of them are littered with the debris of ancient camp-life.

PINEY BRANCH.—This is a small stream entering Rock creek northwest of the city and just beyond the village of Mount Pleasant as you leave it on the Fourteenth-street road. From the point where the stream is crossed by this road to its union with Rock creek it passes through a deep ravine, heavily wooded, rocky in some places, and in others made up of steep, gravelly hills that descend abruptly to the bed of the stream. On these hillsides and in the creek bed may be found thousands of rudely worked stone implements of quartzite belonging to the order of "turtle-backs" or "paleoliths," many of them well formed, others so rudely as to require the eye of an expert to select them from the gravel, and mingled with them all thousands of pebbles showing chipped faces. Here and there may be found smaller implements common to the Indian village sites in the District, but for the most part the implements are of the order first named.

An immense workshop, covering acres, and full of suggestion as to the antiquity of the workmen.

This place is pre-eminently the home of the turtle-back.

Other forms of worked stone appear, it is true, but in no considerable amount when compared with the immense number of the former. This fact, however, is to be noticed, that while the paleolithic form is more abundant at this point than on the village sites already discussed, there is absolutely no difference to be discovered between the turtle-back from Bennings and that from Piney Branch. A series collected from one place and confined to quartzite may be easily substituted one for the other and such substitution escape detection under the most rigid inspection. How, then, can it be said that the one place carries any greater evidence as to the antiquity of man than the other.

But what was going on at Piney Branch when these turtle-backs were made by the thousands and left where finished? Primitive man no more than the modern can be presumed to have worked for the mere work's sake, as it would seem that he had done here. If it is conceded that the turtle-back is a complete implement, fashioned for a distinct purpose, and that purpose worked into the desired

form, we then have the problem of furnishing a reason sufficient to warrant reasonable beings in methodically manufacturing weapons or tools, and then as methodically throwing them away, only to make others precisely like them.

ANALOSTAN, BENNING, AND CHAIN BRIDGE.—With respect to the general character of the relics found at these places, there are no such marked differences as to merit especial attention, the range of material varying but slightly with locality and the variance in form being scarcely perceptible. With these differences it is not the purpose of this paper to deal.

Bringing together such evidences of primitive occupation as may be gathered from these fields, it will be observed that the material employed included quartz, quartzite, argillite, "ironstone" (feruginous sandstone), with here and there a stray bit of work in chert, chalcedony, and jasper; and that from this material were made axes, knives, scrapers, drills, arrow-heads, and other implements common to ancient domestic life. Each of these objects, however, whether tool or weapon, by its form suggests the purpose for which it was made, and furnishes frequently irrefragable testimony of having served that purpose. But in company with these, and made of quartzite, quartz, and argillite, may be found that mysterious nondescript, the "turtle-back," whose form suggests neither use nor purpose. Bearing no signs of any greater antiquity than the arrow-head, by the side of which it is found, showing no indications of ever having been used, but identical in form with the "paleoliths" from the valleys of the Somme and Delaware, they are found in such considerable numbers and so intimately associated with implements of undoubted Indian origin as to almost force the conclusion that both were the handiwork of the same people.

At the Cleveland meeting of the American Association, August 21, the subject of the palæolithic implements found on the surface in various parts of the United States was discussed. Mr. Thomas Wilson, Curator of the Department of Prehistoric Archeology in the Smithsonian Institution, made a report of over three thousand specimens of this class which had been reported to him in response to a circular sent out some months ago. A lively discussion took place on the holding over of old forms into later epochs and the danger of studying American archeology by European methods and standards.

THE VERB "TO HAVE" OR "POSSESS."—In the Tutu Athapascan dialect of Oregon, possession is expressed by verbs meaning, primarily, "to put down." The following varieties were gained by the writer at the Siletz Agency, Oregon, in 1884: 1. To have or put down a piece of land, house, stove, chair, table, etc. 2. To have or put down a cord, rope, etc. 3. To have or put down a rectilinear object, a paper, or a book. 4. To have or put down any garment. 5. To have or put down any long animate (non-human) object, as a fish. 6. To have or put down a child, twins, etc., said of the mother (*twins*, in Tutu, nat-ne ni-niçl'-tê, *two laid down*; in the cognate Tcê-mê or Joshua dialect, *a new-born infant*, qa'-notsa ni'niçl-ti'; *new-born twins*, nat'-ně no'-tsa niçl-ti'; and *adult twins*, nat'-ne mic'-qle-qt'a'-i. In the cognate Naltunne tunne dialect, *she has a child*, tse'-qe yi-ti'). 7. To have or put down any long inanimate object, as a plank. Other verbs of putting or placing occur, but they are used differently. In the Ku-itc or Lower Umpqua dialect, of the Yakonan stock, there are several verbs of "having," but they differ from the verbs of "laying down," there being two of the latter: 1, to lay down an animate object, and, 2, to lay down an inanimate one. In the Siouan languages, "to have" is distinct from "to put down."

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In Iroquois, no distinction is made between the verbs "to have" and "to lay down." 1. The present tense may be translated by "to be laying down," "to be acquiring," or "to lay" or "put down habitually." 2. The past and perfect tenses, being alike, may be translated by "have laid down," or simply "to have" or "possess."* This is applicable to all objects other than the different members of the body, undetached from it. Another verb denotes the possession of parts of the body, from the very nature of the case, and this verb signifies to have as a member or part of a structure.

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* In Creek, huilă'dshās is used in a similar manner: *I own*, lit., *I set up standing*; but it is said of animals only: *I set up* (a beast) *on its feet*.

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